

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: July 9, 2007

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 9(d): Consideration of resolution amending Resolution No. 07-13 to change the grant recipient to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for the acquisition of APNs 648-0-070-060, 648-0-200-020, and 648-0-183-050, unincorporated Ventura County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution amending Resolution No. 07-13 to change the Proposition 84 grant recipient from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for the acquisition of APNs 648-0-070-060, 648-0-200-020, and 648-0-183-050, unincorporated Ventura County.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204(c) of the Public Resources Code

Background: At its February 26, 2007 meeting the Conservancy adopted Resolution No. 07-13 which authorized a Proposition 50 and a Proposition 84 grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the acquisition of APNs 649-0-070-050, 649-0-070-060, 649-0-070-360, 648-0-200-020, and 648-0-183-050 on the south-facing slope of Chatsworth Peak in the Los Angeles River watershed portion of Ventura County. The staff report from that action is attached and there is a brief projection description at the conclusion of this report. The Proposition 50 grant was for \$50,000 and the Proposition 84 grant for up to \$225,000. The MRCA's funding partners are the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and the Foundation to preserve the Santa Susana Mountains via the Santa Susana Mountains Park Association.

Subsequent to that action three events have happened. First, the MRCA closed on one of the parcels (APN 648-0-070-050) exhausting the Proposition 50 grant and \$10,000 from the Foundation. Second, staff counsel determined that the conservation easement on APN 649-0-070-360 was best purely funded with private money. Third, as one of funding partners, the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) stepped up to be the entity to acquire options on the remaining three parcels pending the availability of Proposition 84 funds in the fall. The RSRPD took action authorizing using its funding to acquire those options. RSRPD owns a ten-acre cluster of parcels a few thousand feet west of the three subject parcels.

The proposed action would amend Resolution No. 07-13 to change the Proposition 84 grant recipient from the MRCA to RSRPD for the acquisition of APNs 648-0-070-060, 648-0-200-020, and 648-0-183-050.

Chatsworth Peak is part of the critical inter-mountain range habitat linkage between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills. In regards to this habitat linkage, most attention has focused on the north-facing slope of the peak specifically on the connection between Santa Susana Pass and Box Canyon Road. A high quality habitat linkage also exists across the south-facing slope via Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. The south-facing slope contains a high concentration of large sandstone outcrops and unique micro-habitats. However the only protected land between the State Historic Park and Box Canyon is an approximately 10-acre cluster of open space owned and managed by RSRPD. Efforts are underway to develop many of the other lots in this corridor. A portion of the subject ownership is located on the edge of a broad, gently-sloping shelf of land between Lilac Lane and Studio Road. This shelf makes an ideal area for a trail between the State Historic Park and the North American Cut Off which is a frequently traveled dirt road between Box Canyon Road and Sage Ranch Park.

The subject parcels contain many large outcrops that rise several hundred feet up to the described gently-sloped plateau. The northernmost lot contains a large flat open area that is accessible via the same dirt road as the Zorro's cabin parcel. The rocks in this area contain a natural basin that fills to a depth exceeding five feet with a length exceeding fifteen feet. The clear water supports many unique plant and invertebrate species including fairy shrimp.